



Maciej Zienkiewicz — an engineer by profession, but a photographer by choice. An amateur, it must be said. Living in Sweden for 15 years now.

This book is meant to reflect how life in Scandinavia has influenced my artistic expression. I imagine it as an attempt to approach the ideal embodied in the Swedish word *Lagom*. Some people misinterpret its meaning as something akin to “lukewarm water” — avoiding extremes, bland and gray. But that’s not true. The word stands for a perfect balance in everything around us. A kind of Scandinavian yin and yang.

The cover artwork is the only instance of AI being used in my work, as I personally consider the presence of AI in art to be a mistake. Art is not about generating images — it is about communicating through emotions, something this construct is unnecessary for. I don’t believe (though I know many would disagree) that prompting is the modern equivalent of a painter’s brush.

So, I requested the generation of a symbol that would visually capture the essence of that word. This version is my favorite outcome of that experiment.



6 years of photography as a ‘Swede’

Prolog

While browsing through my portfolio titled Lagom—a word borrowed from Swedish (its definition, as I interpret it, can be found on the back cover)—I came to the conclusion that it was finally time to create a book-album. A collection that could reflect the meaning of that word not only in content and form, but even in the number of photographs it contains. The book will be neither too small nor too large—just right. Hopefully, no one will fall asleep halfway through my commentary, but neither will they feel they’ve overpaid for a few meager pages of pictures.

This idea had long been forming in my mind, slowly taking on a more defined shape. I didn’t want this book to be just another compilation of loosely arranged photographs in a standard photo album format. I also wanted to satisfy my writing ambitions—to impose, in a sense, my own narrative. My goal was to shape it into a kind of story about my journey with photography since moving to Sweden. Although not all of the images were taken here—in fact, one could say that most were not—life in this country has nevertheless had a profound influence on what my photographs have become and on the vision they ultimately express.

After many years of pondering what it is that I actually photograph, I’ve finally managed to describe it in a few simple words: I photograph patterns. Patterns and, in a way, symbols that form recognizable motifs—some created by nature, others by human hands. These motifs serve as visualizations, sometimes geometric in form, sometimes less so, but always shown in the most minimalist way possible. Without unnecessary detail, focused on the essence of form. Personally, I find this philosophy closest to the Japanese ink-painting art known as sumi-e. There, the entire image is conveyed using at most two colors—most often just one. Details are suggested rather than defined, their presence hinted at by subtle shades of light. Between the brushstrokes, there is more empty space than filled. The point is for the image itself to suggest what the viewer is meant to see, leaving room for imagination to fill in the blanks—much like Picasso’s sketches, where a few well-drawn lines evoke in our minds a far richer composition.

The photographs span the years 2020-2024, though they are not arranged chronologically. In this case, chronology would serve only to document my attempts at developing a consistent style—and that was never the point. Instead, I organized the images into groups linked by mood, or by similar locations or seasons. Each photograph is accompanied by a brief story and my personal interpretation of what it depicts.

The recommended way to experience this book is simple: first, look at the photograph. Then, read the accompanying text. And finally—return to the photograph once more. At the end, compare the impression you had before and after reading my words.

Maciej Zienkiewicz
Sztokholm, Czerwiec 2025

Chapter 1

Mists, Trees, and Blurred Views

This chapter shows the beginnings of my fascination with the work of Michael Kenna. Minimalist, mostly square frames with an atmosphere that invites contemplation. I didn't so much copy his compositions as keep them in mind while searching for my own. I loved—and still love—their calm and lack of chaos, in contrast to the world around me. Their square proportions speak to me, imposing a sense of symmetry and order even when those qualities aren't really present. At least not directly.

Kenna almost exclusively photographs in a square format, as he mostly works with 6×6 cm medium-format film. I can choose my final proportions afterwards—a bit of an easy way out, perhaps, but then again, I'm not the master here.

The best weather for this kind of photography is fog. Unfortunately, nature is rather stingy with fog in Sweden. Whenever I do get some, I use it to the fullest. Of the eight photos in this chapter, four were taken within perhaps two hours of each other. All of them in the town of Sigtuna, which—according to local legend and, more reliably, historical sources—is the oldest town in Sweden. This fact didn't visibly influence the frames, but it's worth mentioning for educational purposes.

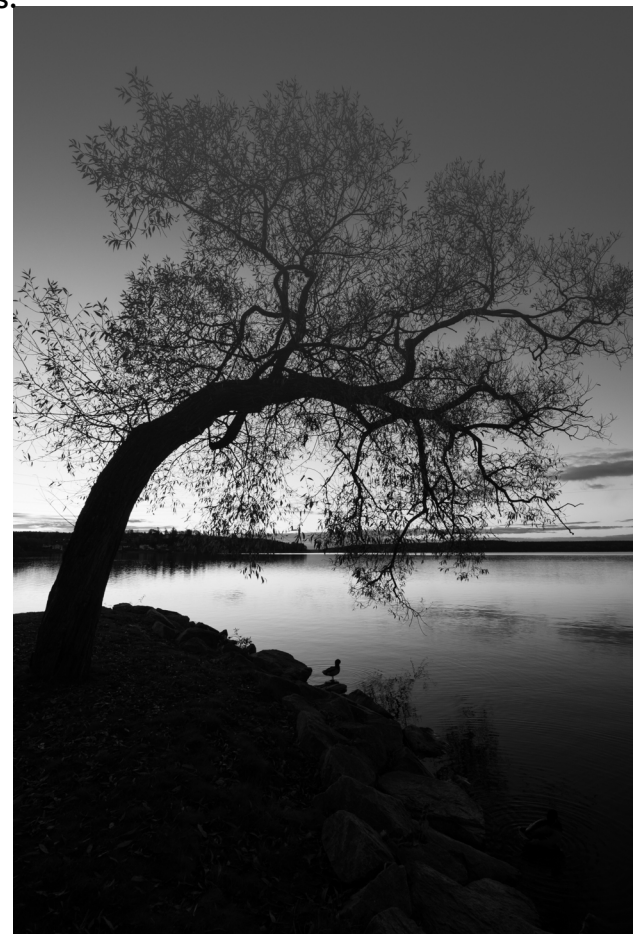
Sigtuna's location, tucked into a narrow inlet of Lake Mälaren, means the ice lingers there longer in winter, and the dew point often matches the air temperature thanks to the high humidity (Sweden's Stockholm coast is otherwise fairly dry). This increases the odds of fog that actually stays for a while. Sadly, from my perspective, the number of worthwhile compositions in that area has become quite limited after so many visits—mostly the lakeshore and a few church ruins in the center.

On that same shore stands a wonderfully photogenic tree, which appears here twice. One photograph was taken on an early autumn night, the other during a spring fog. The main subject is the same, but the different light changes the mood entirely. The tree looks weary, as if pondering whether to end it all by drowning itself in the lake. In both shots, you can spot supporting characters—the ducks. Companions in the tree's misery, though perhaps not sharing its pessimism. To me, both images form one story—a continuation in time, and a consistent interpretation.



Pic.1.

Amid the misty haze,
A shadow, worn and dark, struggles,
Fighting unseen wars.



Pic.2.



Pic.1. OVERWHELMED
Sigtuna, Sweden, Nov.2019



Pic.2. BRUSH
Sigtuna, Sweden, Oct. 2021

A tiny islet, maybe a hundred meters from the shore. Usually, it's a portrait of the forest's intricate, chaotic nature. But at that moment, the light diffused through the fog seemed to switch all those details off. To me, that clump of trees looked like a ship adrift at sea—conspicuously lacking a navigator, and most likely a captain, crew, or passengers as well. A kind of freshwater Flying Dutchman, though stripped of any demonic nature. Everything outlined only in stark contrasts; the finer details of the story had to be imagined—but that wasn't hard. The suggestion felt strong.



Pic.3.

Morning light spills wide,
Rippling across the water,
The islet drifts like a ship.

A picture from the day of mists doesn't show many distinct shapes. It seems gray, dull, and without a clear vision. That's the first impression—but I'd suggest taking a second look. There's mostly fog—an undeniable fact. Yet slowly, the rest begins to emerge. And that's precisely what makes this photograph so captivating. It's like an almost blank canvas, with wide patches of untouched linen waiting to be filled in by the viewer. The four little birds caught in the frame became symbols of flight into the unknown. An unknown lingering somewhere in the background. Each of them seems to have a slightly different idea—or perhaps no idea at all—of which way to go in that fog. And to preempt sharper questions: no, they probably didn't find any clear route after all...

A misty lake drifts,
Its faint glow embracing shapes
That appear from nowhere.
Pic.4.





Pic.3. Ö ITSELF
Sigtuna, Sweden, Nov.2019



Pic.4. FOUR BIRDS IN THE FOG
Sigtuna, Sweden, Nov.2019

A change of location. And time, too, for that matter. A dark forest. A shot straight out of a horror movie set—or at least a brooding thriller. In reality, it was just a patch of birches in a small city forest on the outskirts of Stockholm, not far from the above-ground part of the metro line. Interestingly, it was taken on a sunny spring day. As I’ve mentioned before, I usually avoid compositions like this, because the forest and its internal visual chaos clash with my ideal of a photograph à la Michael Kenna. But here, by accident, I glanced at the screen set to monochrome and saw something I hadn’t consciously noticed when looking in that direction.

Though the very fact that I even had the camera on in that spot might suggest that years of training my eye to see in frames and detect patterns had a subconscious influence at that moment. Despite the apparent abundance of detail in the image, none of it demands attention; it all merely complements the scene. Looking at it, I get the feeling that something unpleasant is about to emerge from between the trees. Yet I’m fully aware that at most it could be a gang of angry squirrels or a tipsy, overenthusiastic homeless person.

A first exception. My favorite square composition didn’t work here. I tried, several times even—with very poor results.

Kraken. A photo that, to my immense surprise, earned me an Honorable Mention at the Monochrom VISION Awards. Taken literally a stone’s throw from home. A small, periodically soggy clearing where birdwatchers peer through their scopes and cameras from early morning, disturbing the weekend idyll for the local birds. I always thought the photo was decent—but apparently not as much as the judges did. Interestingly, no one can ever take it again: the tree has since completely declined. It has essentially become part of the ground. Does that increase the photo’s value? Make it more unique? For marketing purposes, let’s say this image is one of a kind precisely because it can’t be replicated.

But its most important feature is that, despite the overall chaos, the very shape of the fallen tree—its branches immediately evoke the image of tentacles in the viewer’s mind. You don’t see the details or the texture of the bark, nor the blades of grass. What you see is the outline, the shape that should evoke a sea monster rising from the depths.



Pic.5.
A dark, tangled wood,
A trick of the wandering mind,
A bright birch grove gleams.

A kraken emerges,
Rising from the abyssal deep,
Life comes to its end.
Pic.6.



On the other side of that urban reserve, where the Kraken was, there's another "Mecca" for bird enthusiasts (no innuendo, please). And, of course—what a surprise—there's fog. Though the word "fog" doesn't quite capture what you see in the picture. In English, there are two, maybe more, words for describing different kinds of fog. After all, in England, fog is as common as snow is to Eskimos. Mist and fog—both translate to "mgła" in Polish according to Google Translate, but the first is more like a suspended drizzle, airy and "light." That's exactly what was here.

I had taken pictures here probably a hundred times before, drawn to something in this landscape. But this time, it was that delicate mist that created the aerial perspective you see. Without it, the whole pattern in the foreground would have blended into the background. And these are the "Guardians"—the small one and the large one. Then some undergrowth—the ones being guarded. And in the distance, the rest of the forest—perhaps the audience. An unorthodox composition helped me create something personal. And it didn't ruin the photo.

"A picture of woe and despair"—and I don't mean the technical quality of the photo, but literally the subject matter. The heart of Scandinavian autumn. Wind of the locally vicious kind. Gray, dull, and gloomy. Yet the view of the island—which, judging by the number of nests in summer, is a bustling breeding ground for birds—strikes you at first glance. As if some catastrophe had ravaged these trees, leaving almost nothing behind. Except, of course, the nests. I used a long exposure to make the scene feel more static, frozen in its waiting for better times (read: spring). This technique also smoothed the choppy water a bit, but interestingly, the wind barely moved the trees, allowing their harsh, unpleasant outlines to stand against the near-white sky.

This image doesn't quite fit with the rest of the series because it has a slightly different mood. There's a pause in time, minimal detail, but no joyful calm. Rather, there's silent suffering. Probably for this reason, few would hang it on a wall. And that, in a nutshell, is the essence of my marketing strategy—include an unsellable print in the portfolio. :)



Pic.7.

On duty they stand,
Along the foggy forest line,
Guardians of silence.

Despair and ruin,
Along the horizon line.
Renaissance in spring.
Pic.8.





Pic.6. KRAKEN
Barkarby Sweden, Mar.2020



Pic.5. THE DARK FORREST
Kista-Sthlm Sweden, Feb.2022





Pic.8. MEMORY OF LEAVES
Trosa, Sweden, Oct. 2019

The last photograph in the series is one of my favorites—Four Witches. Also taken in Sigtuna, though of course on a different day and under different conditions. As you can see, it was winter. The beginning.

Unlike the previous images, which were mostly calm, almost mystical, this one carries a subtle dynamism. In the clouds, yes, but also in the trees themselves. These trees seem to struggle, to pull against the ground. As if they were trying to catch someone—or to flee somewhere. A scene frozen in restrained fury. That's my interpretation. Someone else might say they're dancing, or conversing with the wind. Or something equally poetic. There is great energy in this image, but not a tiring kind—so it is "hangable."

SUMMARY

It's time to wrap up this chapter. A summary to the best of my abilities. And those abilities are what they are—probably not going to improve.

All of these photographs, as I've mentioned, were inspired by the work of M. Kenna and by sumi-e. Minimalism, mainly calm, plenty of space for personal interpretation. All were taken in Sweden. In fact, no more than a few dozen kilometers from my home. For me, the idea that one must travel far and wide to take the "best" photographs is a stereotype—a notion that it's beautiful everywhere we aren't. A myth promoted by travel-photography influencers with vested interests. Recognizability or popularity of locations has never been the strong suit of my images.

Each of these photographs was taken before 2021, which, as will be evident in the following chapters, is linked to a slight shift in my photographic territory, and to a lesser extent, also in style.

To conclude this somewhat lengthy and qualitatively questionable paragraph: all of these images are meant to guide the viewer through a world of tranquil nature—yet a world full of hidden patterns that surround us. Observing them is a wonderful game and an extraordinary sensory experience.



Pic.9.

Gloomy witches fight,
Silently against the world.
Until the world's end.



Pic.9. FOUR WITCHES
Sigtuna, Sweden, Jan. 2021

Chapter 2

Somewhat stranger compositions. Chaos and darkness enter the scene of minimalism.

The natural landscapes of the previous chapter start to merge with the suburban, as I began looking closer to home for traces of human presence. In the form of patterns and symbols, of course. I still tried to keep each frame from being too busy. I was searching—and I think I found a way to carry the principles of my work into urban areas, where I like to live and spend time. Previously, the very idea of street photography repelled me intensely.

Yet in the city, and even in the suburbs, more happens, and my first frames were far less calm than the previous ones. Luckily, they never visually approached street reportage. It took me a while to extract from this busy environment the essence that truly belonged in the frame.

I have this internal conviction that to have control over your life, you must limit it in certain aspects. You can't control everything—that's obvious. But you need a few anchors, a few frames. And I apply this principle directly to my photography. So, the more chaos there is, the more time it takes me to build my own little "garden."

The images in this chapter are arranged according to the amount of chaos present in them—descending. Interestingly, they do not follow a chronological order. This proves that my development was not linear. It was more akin to natural evolution, with its fair share of mistakes along the way, and sometimes even dead ends.

"The Gate" to the park. Partly shaped naturally by trees, partly by the gardener's hand. For reasons I still don't fully understand, it struck me as intriguing. This frame is very far from my usual representations. Many subjects, plenty of details across all three planes. Yet there is depth, multiple layers overlapping. And the form of each dominates the details contained within it. The photograph sparks curiosity. Where does this gate lead? The outlines of doors can be seen. What lies beyond at all?



Pic.10.

Gate to paradise,
Diverse trees frame the pathway.
What lies beyond it?

Light approaches,
Through the heart of the blackened wood.
Step back or remain?

Pic.11

A canyon of trees, and within it, an approaching car. In other words, don't go toward the light. Here, the chaos is much smaller, yet one cannot say that classical calm prevails. Rather, it's a quiet unease. Who on earth is driving at this hour? It's dark, freezing, and generally grim. Add to that the fact that the photograph was taken in a cemetery early in the morning... A beautiful one, set within a natural forest park and listed as UNESCO heritage (Skogskyrkogården), yet still—a cemetery. A slightly sepulchral mood was inevitable.

Through composition and contrast, I wanted to focus attention on the part of the image that mattered most to me. No distracting details in the forest wall. Let's concentrate on what's approaching. If only to step back at the right moment...



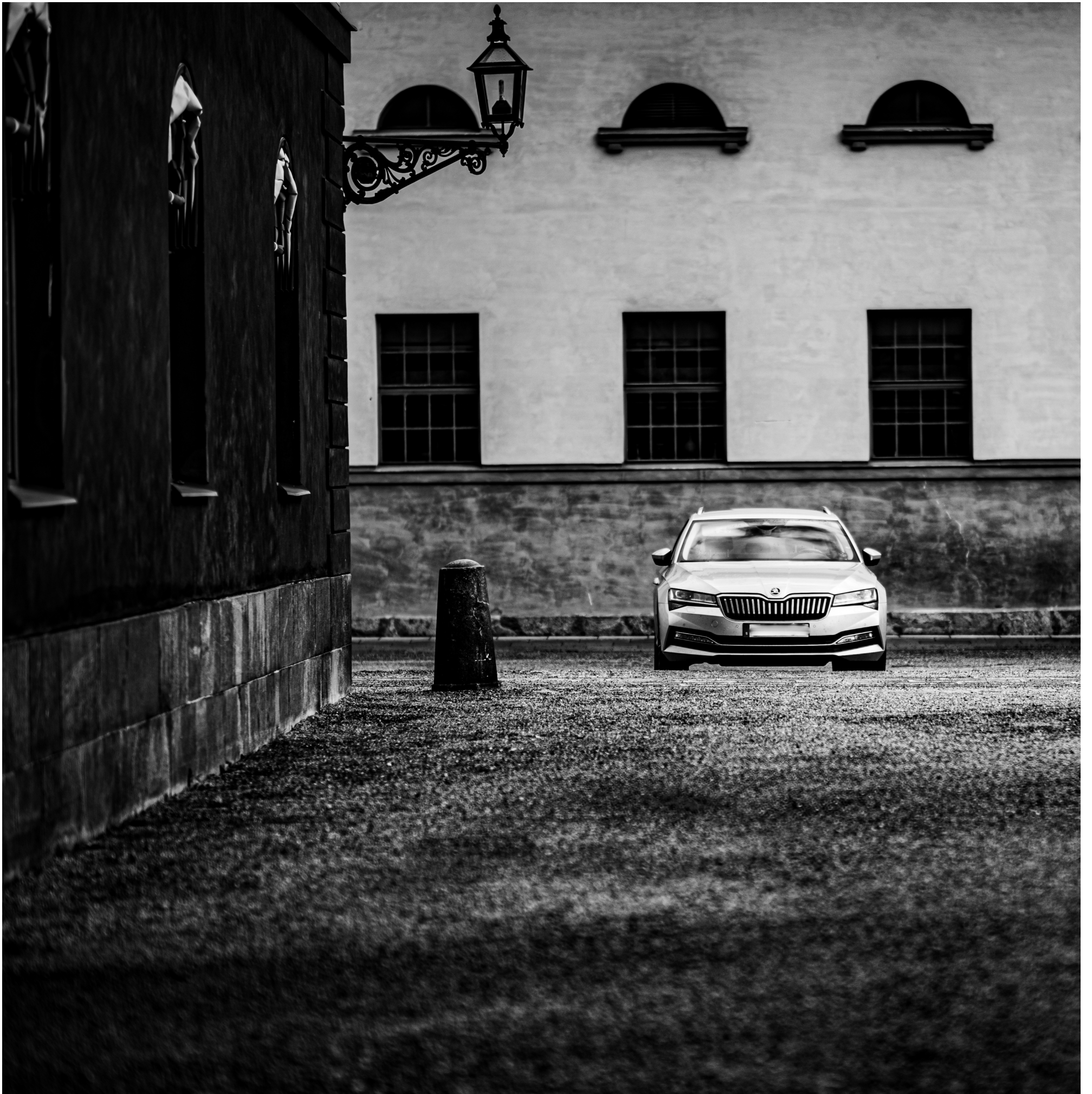


Pic.10. ENTRANCE TO...
Ulriksdal/Solna, Sweden, Sep.2021



Pic.11. IT IS COMING
Skogkyrkogården/Sthlm Sweden, Dec.2021





Pic.13. A CAR
Sthlm, Sweden, Aug. 2023

“Ultimate Supervisor”—or, in my free translation, “the final decision-maker.” The title came to me before I even pressed the shutter. The sculpture was impressive. Its darkness and weight were undiminished, even under the harsh light of a summer day in Prague. The lamppost in the background is meant to symbolize the light, pushed aside and extinguished by the hooded figure. The symbolism here is probably obvious, and the photographer’s role in creating the message is minimal, as all these elements were already in place. One merely had to find the right perspective and frame it within the surroundings.

This image is neither groundbreaking nor exceptional, but it carries a kind of darkness that can hang on a wall without causing nightmares. Perhaps not in a child’s room—but certainly in a hallway. A specific form of memento mori.



Pic.12.

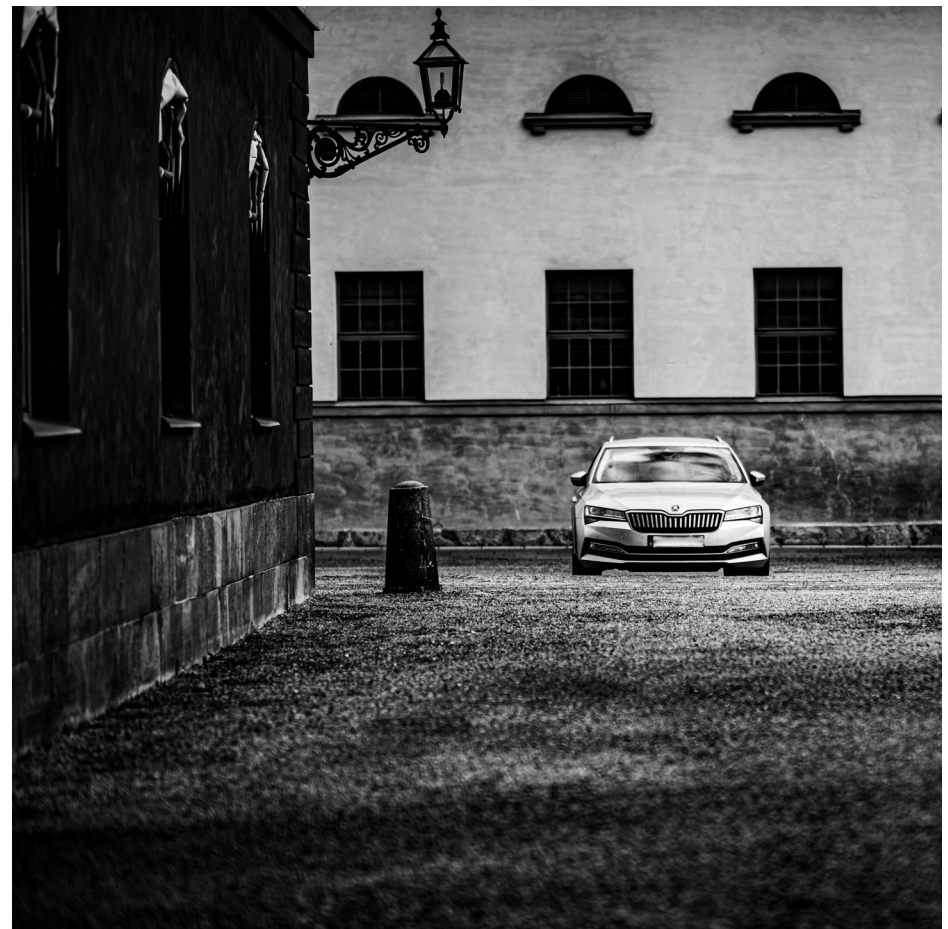
What is destined for us,
A dark figure will foretell.
Terrible knowledge.

Pic.13.

Light revealed the part
That stands apart from the rest.
It harmonizes.

I once had an episode where I photographed cars, wanting to see if my minimalist compositions could be applied to somewhat commercial subjects. This, too, was inspired—again by M. Kenna, this time through his commercial work. I wanted to see if I could do it too. The results were mixed, mostly worse than I had hoped. Yet I kept a few of those images on my drive. This one is among them—a kind of final achievement from that period.

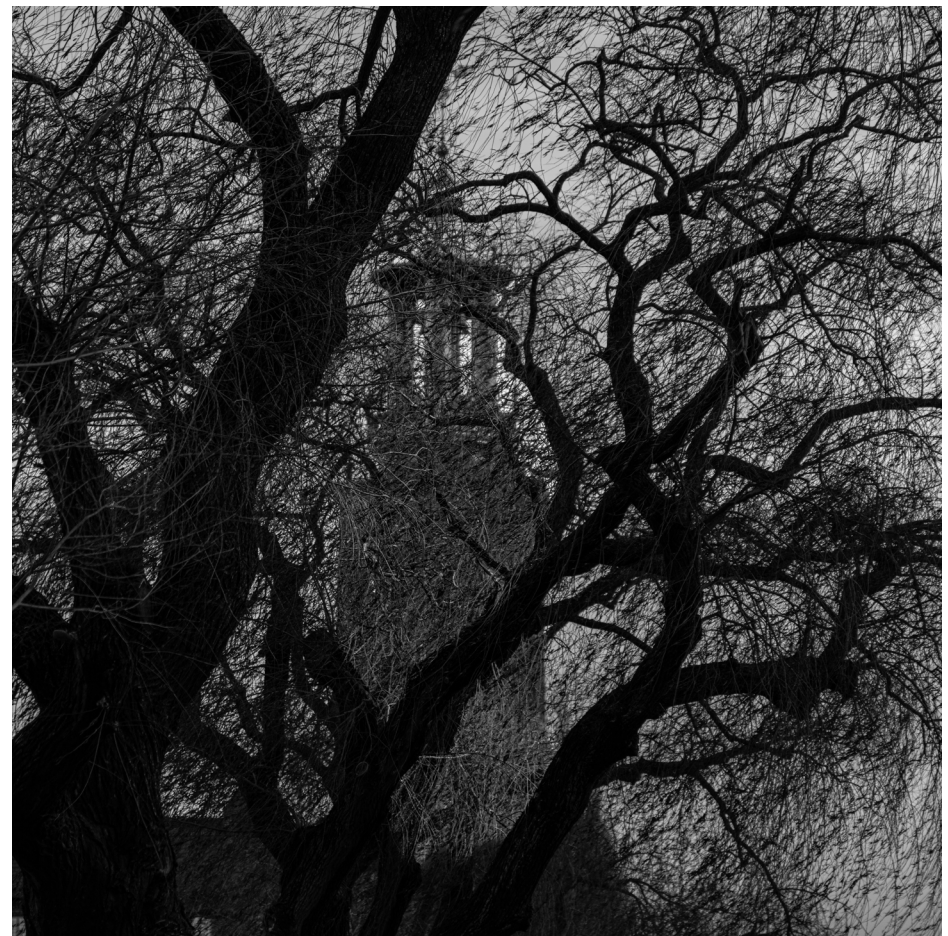
The car, however, was not part of the original intention and, arguably, still isn’t the subject. In my view, the photograph would be just as strong without that Skoda. It disrupts the pattern—but in an interesting way. It seems both out of place and fitting at the same time. Slightly schizophrenic, perhaps. Captured in a way that could simultaneously be art and commerce. Because of this, I have mixed feelings about this photograph. I’ve wanted to remove it from the portfolio several times, yet it always returned. Perhaps my intuition is telling me that I created exactly what I intended.



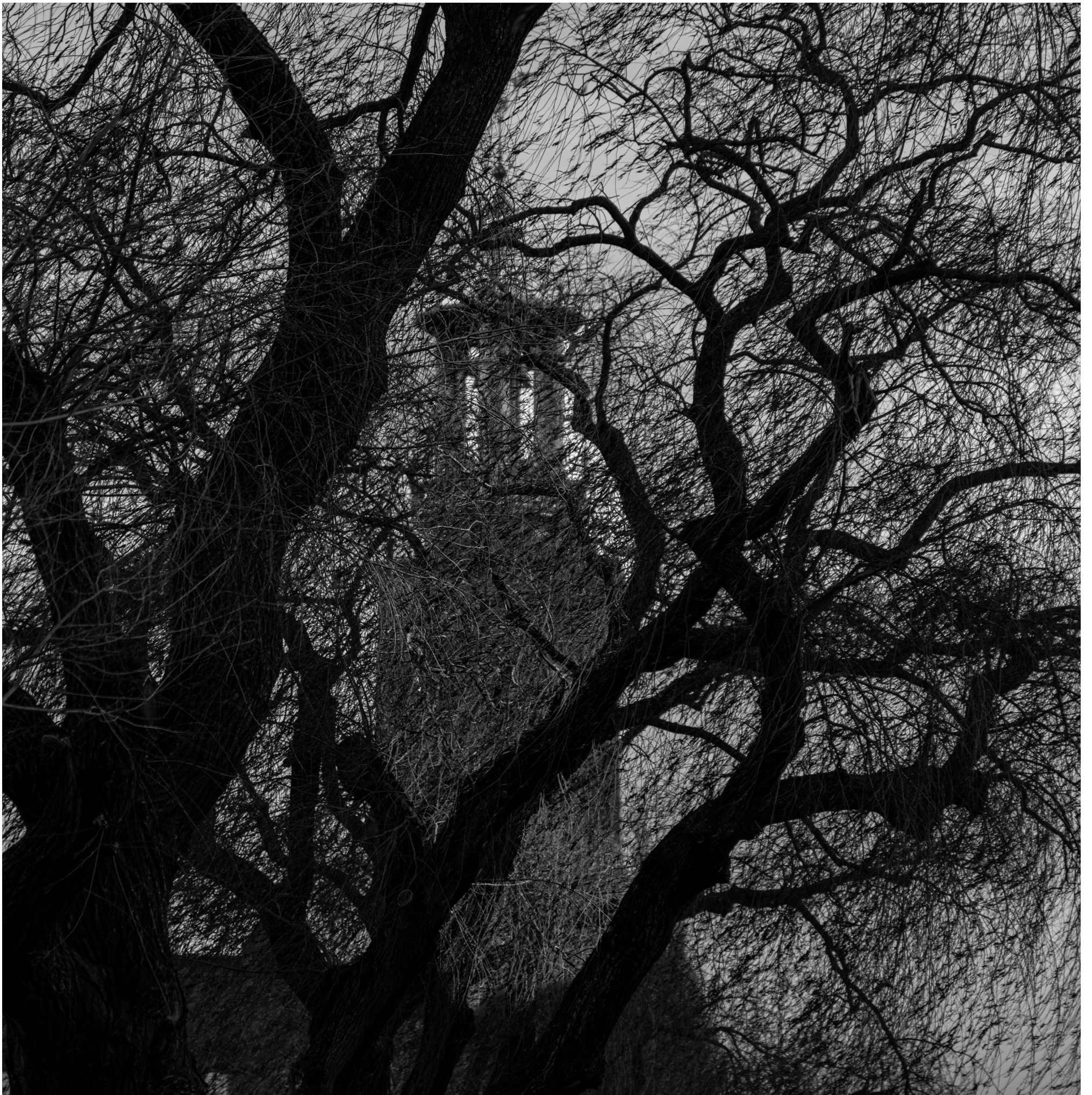
f it weren't for the foreground, I could probably enter this photograph in a competition for the photographic equivalent of a Golden Raspberry—if such a thing exists. With a good chance of at least making the top ten. Just a postcard from Stockholm. Fortunately, human creations, aided by nature, usually become somewhat more unique and often more beautiful.

Seen in color, this photograph—though not particularly rich in hues—is also very intriguing. The golden dome of City Hall forms a unique composition with the nearly navy sky and completely black branches. These branches separate the planes, giving the image a different resonance. They are almost entirely black. I didn't want any texture visible on them. Nothing to distract or soften the sharp outlines of the trees. Luckily, I didn't have to remove any squirrels or birds—probably because it was cold.

Altogether, the scene feels a bit like a frame from a post-apocalyptic film, where nature, after many years, reclaims urban territory for itself.



Pic.14.
Golden majesty
Fades into the distance.
Blackness surrounds it.



Pic.14. TANGLED C-HALL
Sthlm, Sweden, Jan.2023

SUMMARY

The photographs collected in this chapter don't feel quite as "mine" to me today. They are interesting, but they don't hit the mark—the point where instinctively I feel that everything is exactly as it should be. These images are more a record of a journey, or more precisely, a certain stage of a journey. A transitional period.

They come from different times, because, as you may have noticed, my path has never been straightforward. Rather, it is full of detours, occasional returns to certain points along the route, and sometimes even unexpected shortcuts along side paths. This chapter, then, could be considered an experiment. Not necessarily a very successful one, but one that allowed progress in understanding my own self through photography.

Chapter 3

Return of majestic and/or misty natural postcards.

This is the most minimalist chapter, reflecting a rather fruitful period for my photography. Perhaps thanks to a certain journey to an interesting location, which, let's say, sparked a wave of creative inspiration.

In the spring of 2022, I managed to take a trip to the Faroe Islands—one of those “must be and must shoot” locations for landscape photographers. And although travel photography in iconic places isn't really my thing, the experience there was extraordinary. Partly because someone managed to steal my branded jacket on the plane, and it was only April, during Easter, when everything was closed except for gas stations. And finding clothes there is difficult at the best of times. I was able to borrow a down jacket from the person renting us a room, which allowed me to survive the five days without being forced to stay in the accommodation or shoot from the car.

Our daily excursions were planned around popular locations, but at least I intended to approach them differently. My goal was to ensure that the final stop of the trip wasn't necessarily the only—or even the most important—destination.

We didn't manage to reach everything, as we barely secured a spot on the sole daytime ferry to Kalsoy. Yet there was still so much to take in—a true display of the four seasons, repeated several times over each day. Fog, clouds, harsh light, soft light, and majestic landscapes. The views and conditions were outstanding, but I kept in mind that the most famous spots had already been photographed, and not necessarily in a way that interested me. Fortunately, I didn't have to force myself to search for other locations. It was enough to simply look at the well-known places from a slightly different perspective.

The first six photographs are from that archipelago. They are exactly what I consider the ideal representation of nature photography. For example, studies of cliffs are the quintessence of minimalism—there aren't even obvious reference points. Only after longer observation can one perceive, among other things, how enormous they really are. Other images focus more on the nature of light and how it changes the perception of ordinary elements in the surrounding landscape, or how it creates incredible patterns through the interplay of shadows.

One of the calmer moments on the islands. A road winding around the bay. From it, one could admire both the majesty of the surrounding mountains and some rather striking salmon farms. We stopped for a “nature bathroom” break. I stayed on the road and wandered around the bend. That’s when a shaft of light emerged from behind the clouds.

Had I been even slightly religious, I probably would have experienced some sort of epiphany—or at least a feeling of unity with God, or whatever one calls it. But I’m not. And the only thought that came to me was that it looked like a natural signpost: go there. Moments later, it struck me as somewhat silly, since there was no other direction to go. Unless... vertically, or back the way we came.

Setting aside those slightly foolish thoughts, the whole scene, for me, defines the nature of these islands—the sun and clouds struggling for dominance in the landscape, a battle ongoing for millennia. I could watch it for hours, despite the absence of a fast-moving plot or living protagonists.

The water visible in this photograph is not the ocean, but a freshwater lake. This time it was Eysturoy. We stopped at a tiny roadside parking area to grab a snack. As I mentioned earlier, almost all restaurants were closed for much of our stay, forcing us into improvised meals from store-bought or gas station ingredients. We sat on benches set along the lake’s edge. The view was fine, but compared to what we had already seen, it was almost negligible.

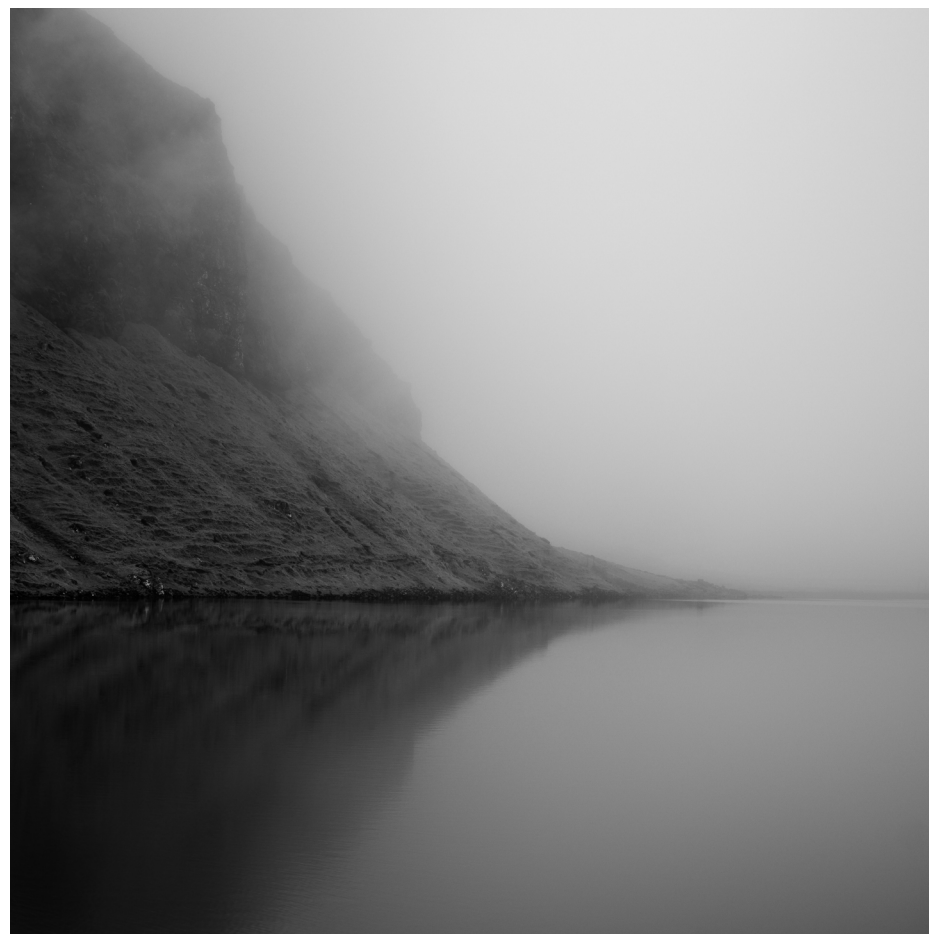
At one point, low clouds rolled in. The parking area was quite high above sea level. The entire surroundings transformed into a magical landscape. I took a dozen shots as the clouds shifted constantly. I chose this one because of the subtle, unexpected symmetry I saw in it. The mood is again a mixture of slight unease and complete calm.

On closer inspection, the composition divides into four quadrants, each in a different shade of gray. The reflection of the rock in the water is very different from the original, which struck me as an illustration of the idea that there are no perfect copies. This is by no means an invitation to become another extension of Instagram. Rather, it’s a reminder that photography is also an act of creation, not merely a reproduction of reality.



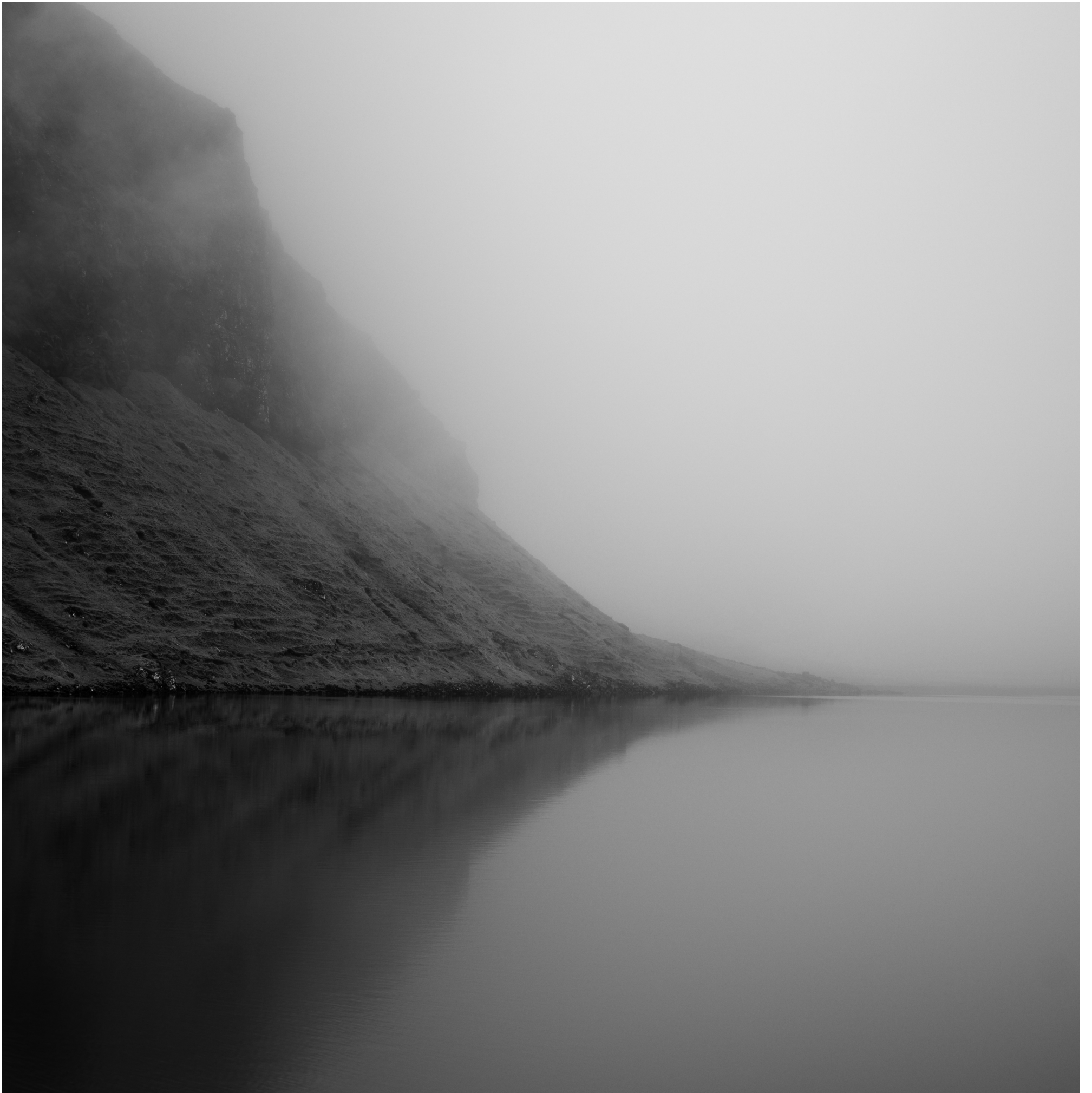
Pic.15.

Light on the road,
Around the bend into the unknown.
Gray outline of the background,
A crow on one side in the mist.
Below, the truth.
Pic.16.





Pic.15. THE WAY TO THE LIGHT
Eysturoy, Faroe Islands, Apr.2022



Pic.16. CLIFF STUDY 2
Eysturoy, Faroe Islands, Apr.2022



Pic.17.CLIFF STUDY 1
Streymoy, Faroe Islands, Apr.2022



Pic.18. TO THE POINT
Eysturoy, Faroe Islands, Apr. 2022

A fragment of the cliffs on the northeastern edge of Streymoy, captured with a telephoto lens, is one of those very touristy spots. The black—or rather, more brownish—beach in Tjørnuvík, where I stood at the time, is incredibly beautiful. But also crowded with photographers. Everyone is taking roughly the same photograph: a slice of black sand, the water, and the cliffs in the distance. I know because I had seen countless versions of it before the trip. I took a few myself. So what? A keepsake. I won't be showing it publicly.

What saved me from being just another copy was the idea of using a telephoto lens—partly because photographers kept stepping into my frame. I stood a little farther back and examined the entire bay as if through binoculars. The conditions, by the standards of these islands, weren't exceptional. Yet those two overlapping cliffs caught my attention. As usual, the photograph lacks a reference point, which makes it difficult to grasp the scale and distance of the rocks. This is precisely why I personally focus on the rough texture of the slopes and their sharp contrast with the sky, and the slightly softer contrast with the sea. Even though the water is a little rippled, the image conveys calm—it reflects endurance.

Saksun, though not the more famous beach. This time, the place described in guides as the second attraction in the area: a beautiful, small church. Guides, however, don't tell the whole story. First, to get there you have to squeeze past sheep on a narrow, not-so-great road for several kilometers. That might have been tolerable if the place itself compensated for the inconvenience. But no—at least not for a photographer. The church was nice, but completely unphotogenic, mostly because of its layout in the landscape. On top of that, it was closed. And when we tried to find the optimal vantage point, we were very rudely kicked out of "private property," which wasn't even clearly marked as such. I understand the irritation with hordes of tourists, but at the time there were very few of us. And it could have been handled more gently, instead of scaring away the nearby birds.

When we returned, disappointed and scolded, to the parking area, I saw the scene captured here. A lake and two slightly overlapping hills behind it. And most importantly, a sliver of light beneath the clouds that appeared between these hills. I initially named this photograph Arrow, but later realized it was actually more of a little arrow pointing to a spot. So I renamed it To the Point. And indeed, that arrow indicated our exact path back to the lodging—much more beautifully than GPS. And in the background, I felt the message: leave this place; there's no reason to stay if you're not welcome here.



Pic.17.

The ancient might of rocks,
Mystical through countless ages.
Equal to the sea.

Direction through the mountains,
Light glimpses far in the distance.
A destination unknown.

Pic.18



A view of the ocean and coastline from the village of Eiði, located on the northern part of Streymoy. This particular cliff struck me as far more interesting than the hundreds of others I had seen along the drive. It was incredibly massive, which becomes apparent when you look closely at the waves at its base. The captured light highlighted details and revealed the unusual texture of the rocks. The composition required a rectangular format. Thanks in part to that, the scene emanates an undefined power. I love looking at the print during moments of waning motivation. There isn't much to describe here; one simply looks and absorbs the message.

And finally, this illustration reminiscent of a Tolkien novel. At first glance, it seems like a typical "Instagram" shot—a postcard display that, after a few minutes, will fade into the depths of the internet. Yet one must admit, it is incredible, and I have no doubt that printed, it will look impressive on a wall. I know, because I did just that. Such duality occurs sometimes. And, like many of my other favorite photographs, it was unplanned.

It is said that the vast majority of landscape photography is a matter of choosing the location, composing the frame, and waiting for the conditions—rarely chance. But I've written before that I don't practice my craft that way. I cannot stand for hours, waiting, or return a dozen times to the same spot just for different weather. I collect noticed patterns and act in the moment. There is always something to capture. Perhaps some moments escape me, but I do not dwell on it, neither during nor after.

Returning to the photograph: we were actually on our way back to the lodging, as the weather had become exceptionally unpleasant—and remarkably, in its unpleasantness, stable and unhelpful for photography. But at one point, the sky cleared just as we were passing the bay on the southern side of Vágur. I saw the view and already had the frame in my mind. I used those few minutes. The islands look somewhat cartoonish, a little like in comic books. Birds feeding at the fish farms kept entering the frame, as if summoned to create a more interesting scene. On top of that, one of the clouds drifted into place, adding an even more unique touch. Perfect synchronization.

This location, as I learned later, is called Trøllkonufingur. I didn't verify, but it sounds somewhat Swedish—like "the troll's finger." The island is Koltur, and I believe it is uninhabited. But at that moment, it was a magical island, so the name seems obvious.



Pic.19

Rays of light have passed
Through the curtain of the clouds.
Outline of dawn's time.

Like a storybook,
A misty, rocky island drifts.
A bird speeds through sky.
Pic.20





Pic.19. CLIFF STUDY 3
Eysturoy, Faroe Islands, Apr.2022



Pic.20. MAGIC ISLAND
Vagar, Faroe Islands, Apr.2022

At the end, we return to Sweden—more precisely, to the eastern coast, the central and southern Stockholm archipelago. We also move forward in time by two years. It is a cold autumn, yet still without snow. Stormy winds and heavy clouds begin to appear.

For me, the first three photographs form a triptych. Each one is successful on its own, but together they tell an extraordinarily cohesive story about inanimate elements in nature. Elements that have existed on Earth for millions of years, yet are still capable of weaving a compelling narrative. This story is about rocks—their battle with the weather and their resistance to the attacks of the sea.

Following classic storytelling rules, the triptych moves from the general to the specific. The first image shows a distant rock being struck by waves, with dark clouds hanging above it like an executioner's axe. But the strangest thing is that in such conditions the water gleams against the dark stones. This reflected light is the strongest element of this photograph.

The middle photograph moves closer to the rock—not the same as in the previous shot, but similar. Here, the rock is slightly more illuminated, while the rest of the objects fade into a darker background. The rock is extraordinary in its texture, resembling overlapping scars from years of struggle—scars that, rather than detract, add to its beauty. The rock itself seems more delicate and less massive than the previous one, thanks to this light.

The final image focuses on the stones—thus, following my narrative, representing the last stage of the battle with the elements. They are small and again underlit. The victorious water shines with brilliance, surrounding the defeated.

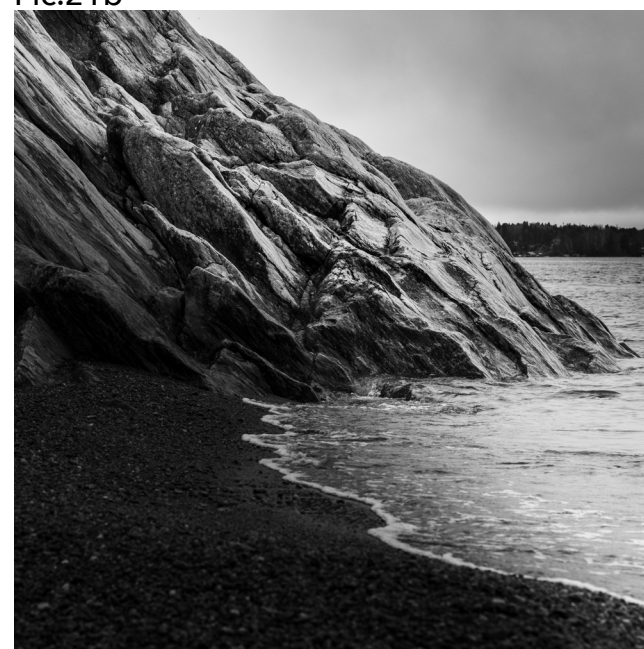
The entire story is meant to be stretched across thousands, even millions of years. Yet, as we know, the photographs were taken in a matter of hours. On a few small beaches, a significant portion of our planet's history is contained. And the interplay of light, which I sought to capture in these photographs, creates a stage-like setting and amplifies the narrative. I am also certain that I could not describe what is seen there more precisely in words. And if I tried, it would probably require countless, often imprecise words spread over many pages.

For the record, one of the photographs was taken in a different location from the other two, yet it fits perfectly within the set.

Pic.21c



Pic.21b



Pic.21a



And finally, as the last image in this chapter, a photograph in a slightly different mood. Less than forty kilometers south of the previous triptych. The image looks as if it were taken in the Caribbean, only stripped of the typical colors of that region. But what is visible does not correspond to the reality I encountered there. A sharp, icy northern wind was blowing. The water was so cold that it cracked the enamel on my teeth. I know because I tested it—organoleptically. With my fingers, which I had to warm for a long time afterward in my pockets.

A long exposure makes the dramatic weather invisible in the frame. I feel that in this case, I truly created something rather than merely “reproduced.” I managed to see that landscape differently and capture it with the camera. I really love this photograph, and also the place. Perhaps that is why it worked.

SUMMARY

All the photographs in this chapter are, for me, the beloved children of the entire previous epoch. Through them, I rediscovered how the foundations of my work should look. But as I mentioned in the previous chapter, I did not realize this immediately. Some time had to pass, marked by mistakes, but also by surprisingly good photographs—though almost as if belonging to someone else.

These discovered foundations will become visible in the following chapters. Often, they will not appear directly—hidden behind additional elements or different subject matter. But that is probably how the evolution of style should look. Interestingly, they do not necessarily need to apply to nature photography. I am now also transferring them into the realm of urban landscape photography. But that is a topic for another book.



Pic.22.

A touch of the tropics
Endures in northern cold.
A grand mistake.



Pic. (21a-21b-21c) TRIADE ROCKS STUDY 1
Nynashamn/Lidingö, Sweden, Apr. 2024





Pic.22. CARRAIBEAN COLD
Nynashamn, Sweden, Apr. 2024

Chapter 4

Combining Landscape with Traces of Human Presence - the Longest Story.

The photographs in this chapter are at once very similar to one another and completely different, which I will attempt to demonstrate in the following paragraphs. Natural landscapes dominate, though generally not far from towns. There is always some trace of human presence or activity. In this way, the narrative of the images becomes more varied, providing a solid foundation for multiple interpretations, including painterly ones.

The first photographs come from Gotland and Fårö, islands on the eastern coast of Sweden. Fårö is practically a microscopic fragment detached from a larger whole, yet it has its own unique characteristics. The main advantage of both islands is their difference from the rest of the coastline around Stockholm. They are “equipped” with a dominance of rocks rather than forests. Moreover, the rocks themselves are extremely original and diverse. Combine this with other rugged landscapes, long-standing traces of habitation, and a windy spring, and you have a recipe for potentially successful photography.

I began, however, with Visby, the capital of Gotland. A medieval town still almost entirely surrounded by walls—remnants of the days of the Hanseatic League, a European economic union in the late Middle Ages. I did not focus on historical architecture, though. I had tried that before and ended up with something very mediocre. Picturesqueness, in my case, does not equal photogenicity. Instead, I spent almost all my time on the bay’s shoreline, in the more modern section.

The shape of the breakwaters, which also functioned as small piers jutting into the Baltic, against the backdrop of gray skies and water, produced a photograph with an interesting asymmetry. Yet it is also subtle in its subject matter. I named it Triangle, although the shape is certainly not depicted directly. One has to look closely and make the association. The name was more a matter of first impression upon seeing the scene. The apparent lack of symmetry does not create chaos; rather, it introduces geometric calm and order. Incidentally, I attempted this photograph a dozen times with slightly adjusted frames. Only one was selected. The arrangement of elements made it difficult to maintain straight lines while keeping in the frame exactly what I wanted. It took me nearly an hour, at the cost of freezing in the wind. I would have been slightly annoyed if even one shot hadn't turned out as I intended.

After the "urban battle," I drove to the north of the island, where there is a ferry crossing to the tiny "Island of Sheep." Made famous by Ingmar Bergman, who once had a summer house there, it now hosts a cultural and film center bearing his name. But that was not why I went. My main goal was to see Bronze Age and early medieval monuments, as well as the extraordinary rocky beaches in the northern part of the island. At that time of year, the island was almost deserted, considering tourists and summerhouse owners. The chance of meeting any locals was close to zero.

I arrived at the very old fishing village, now essentially an open-air museum, called Helgumannens. It consists of just a dozen small cottages, with old fishing equipment arranged around them. But they are situated on a charming beach made of large, white stones polished by wind and water. The bay looks tropical, the water is blue and clear, reminiscent of Bali. If the sky is clear, and we ignore the temperature hovering around zero degrees Celsius, one could easily be fooled about the geographic location. It was ten in the morning, and I was essentially alone, save for a pair of lost tourists who looked as if they regretted leaving their warm beds at this inhuman hour. Silence prevailed—in terms of civilization sounds, for nature was fully audible. Very much so. Yet it was more calming than disturbing. I created the simplest composition I could. A rare wide frame for me, capturing the unity of undeniable traces of human civilization with the surrounding nature. The village fits perfectly into the landscape. In the past, people built this way without indulging in scientific reflections on urban planning. Probably it was easier due to their smaller scale. But I think they were also closer to nature and instinctively felt how to remain in harmony with it. But I think they were also closer to nature and instinctively felt how to remain in harmony with it. But I think they were also closer to nature and instinctively felt how to remain in harmony with it.



Pic.25
Shape in nature strikes,
Nonexistent yet persists—
Still it holds its place.

Pic.26.
Human dwellings stand
On the primordial shore—
Beauty set apart.



Next, I began photographing with a focus on details, and of course, I chose the boat. It was positioned interestingly, slightly to the side and close to the shore, with only the beach and sea as its background. The boat was old, though well maintained. Yet I wouldn't trust it on the water. This frame is somewhat less tranquil than the previous one. I see "wind" in it—the same wind whose constant presence, despite solid clothing, was only a dubious pleasure that day. Its strength and character are reflected in the sharply torn clouds in the background. The boat is the obvious and literal trace of former inhabitants—a trace that probably contains the story of someone's life. Unspoken here, of course. Left for the viewer to complete.

Changing both the season and the location, I went to Skokloster—once, judging by the name, a monastery, and now a hotel and conference center. It is beautifully situated on the shore of a lake, surrounded by a huge park and orchard. In appearance, the monastery more closely resembles a palace, and the scale of the estate suggests former wealth. That winter was truly Scandinavian. Lakes were frozen, forests blanketed in snow, and thermometers read well below zero for weeks. Difficult conditions for my fingers, and somewhat for the equipment as well. Setting up a tripod was torture, encased in thick gloves. Photographing with bare fingers was out of the question if I wanted to keep my skin intact.

In one of the three consecutive images from this location, the traces of civilization are obvious. First, a slightly newer boat than the previous one, frozen into a lake covered in white fluff. The snow creates a sense of silence and a mood no less powerful than fog. The image corresponded to reality. It was very quiet, like wearing headphones with active noise cancellation.

The boat contrasts strongly against the white background. The sun was absent, heavy clouds threatening more precipitation. Thus, light could not be the strongest element in the composition, though fortunately, it wasn't completely "flat" either.



Pic.27

Boat against the sea,
A promise of journeys past—
Never to be made.

Pic.28

Ice binds the still lake,
A boat trapped for a long while—
Patient solitude.





Pic.25. THE TRIANGLE
Visby Gotland, Jan..2020



Pic.26. HELGUMANNENS
Fårö Gotland, Jan..2020



Pic.27. FISHERMAN BOAT
Fårö Gotland, Jan..2020



Pic.28. FORGOTTEN BOAT
Skokloster Sweden, Dec..2023

The next two images resemble typical winter landscapes in terms of subject matter. At first glance, it seems there is only nature. But is that really the case? Look closer: in one of them, there are sunflowers. And they didn't just plant themselves, arranged in a fairly neat row. In the other, there's supposedly a forest, but it doesn't look like a wild woodland. Its edges are sharp against the surroundings. Ah, yes—there's a cultivated field there. One way or another, a "scar" left by humans.

The composition of the sunflowers is very unorthodox. Layered horizontally, it looks against the white background as if someone intentionally arranged these layers. That's exactly what I saw there: strips of something against nothing. The quintessence of minimalism in description, yet that is exactly how it appears to me.

The small forest by the field is a more standard shot, but I deliberately placed the trees slightly to the side so that the forest doesn't end at the edge of the frame. This was meant to introduce an additional element for interpretation. It evokes the thought of what lies beyond the frame, expanding what we see into what we imagine. For some, that will be a little more, for others, a little less. Well, that's how it goes.



Pic.30.
Forest frozen still,
Time of winter's quiet reign—
Enduring in peace.

Pic.29.
These sunflowers
Waiting in the snow's embrace—
Just until summer.



When the snow vanished and the cold gray autumn returned, I moved closer to home. And again, the sunflowers appeared. But this time, the main focal points were other “human” elements of the landscape. Cranes in the background, commonly called “tower cranes.” Yet the name is the only thing they share with nature. A light mist makes them appear very industrial and quite striking against the backdrop.

If I had raised the camera just a little higher, the view would have felt even more urban—a new district under construction on the outskirts of the nature reserve. Just a few centimeters, and the perception of the scene changes completely. But that would also have spoiled the photo in terms of minimalism. And, honestly, I hadn’t even noticed it at the time. I had a specific frame burned into my mind. I didn’t fuss about the title later either. It’s described as simply as in an encyclopedia.



Pic.31.

Shifts in the background,
Nature remains unchanged,
A brief truce unfolds.

Pic.32.
Światło poranka,
Przez mgłę przemyka cicho,
Chłód tnie dzień w pół.

Another slightly different place and definitely another time. Early autumn in northeastern Stockholm. A pasture for horses from a nearby stable. It’s just after sunrise, a light mist pierced by sharp sunlight. Bitterly cold. The sun is there, but certainly not planning to warm anything. Typical green spaces on the city’s edge. A place fully colonized by humans, as evidenced by the fence. The view is beautiful, but only in this light. The light is the true creator here. Without it, this would just be a large lawn on the edge of the woods, heavily marked with horse droppings.

This was a planned, longer photographic outing, yet only this photo survived from the trip. Most interestingly, it was taken right at the very start. I could have skipped the rest of the route. Though in the end, it turned out to be quite a pleasant day for a long walk.





Pic.29. WINTER SUNFLOWERS STUDY 1
Skokloster Sweden, Dec..2023



Pic.30. WINTER FORREST STUDY 1
Skokloster Sweden, Dec..2023



Pic.31. TWO CRANES AND SUNFLOWERS
Barkarby Sweden, Dec..2020



Pic.32. THE MIST STUDY 2
Danderyd Sweden, Oct..2024

Finally, with our annoyingly non-chronological timeline, we almost reach summer. Well, maybe late spring. We are in the Nacka Nature Reserve, southeast of central Stockholm. The view stretches along the fjord toward the old town center. A storm was brewing—though, spoiler alert, it never quite formed. In the photo, the guiding thought is precisely that: the sailor fleeing from the storm. It's meant to provoke a slight tension in the viewer—will the boat make it safely to the harbor? The spoiler at the start confirms the happy ending.

It was early evening, so the sun in Sweden at this time of year hung quite high. The clouds captured in the shot offered a magnificent contrast and sat relatively low. The light produced under these conditions is unique in Sweden—if nothing else, because storms are rare here. There aren't large temperature swings. One of my favorite photos. With just a little imagination, it tells an interesting story.

Now we move on to the images taken chronologically last, relative to all the others. Christmas 2024. This time, it's the Polish coast—specifically, Gdynia-Oksywie. A beach with the remnants of an old torpedo station. A world-class photographic location. I had no idea places like this existed in Poland. I discovered it by chance on Google Maps the day before.

It was a chilly morning, though slightly sunny. The preceding night had been unusually warm for this time of year. The result was a thin, shifting fog. Not entirely stable, so I had to move quickly. Fortunately, there were plenty of compositions to choose from. The torpedo station itself, an unavoidable human intervention in the landscape, provided a striking subject. Alongside it, old wooden breakwaters and countless ships on the horizon added context. Nature was represented by the sea, the beach, and occasionally black seabirds. As I mentioned, the location captivated me. It's worth returning to—perhaps in another season, under different weather conditions. But I will definitely come back.

The symmetrical photo of the torpedo station, with what looks like a perfect "Jesus path" across the water leading toward it, works well. Despite the rather grim image of ruins—which alone hardly evokes calm—the photograph offers a chance for reflection. A place tied to war, after years, can become a sort of memento, possessing its own subtle, integrated beauty within the landscape.

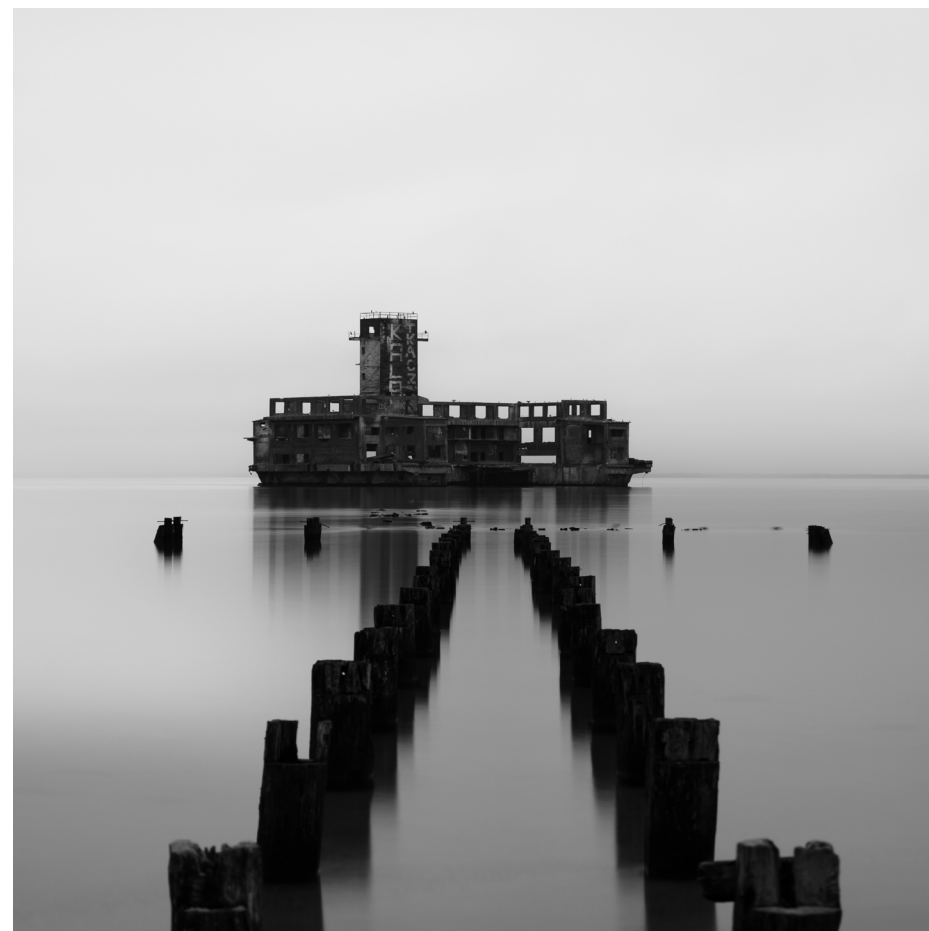


Pic.33.

Storm approaches fast,
A lone boat sails through the waves,
Chasing toward the town.

Pic.34.

Red carpet unfurled
Upon the water's surface—
Memory of glory.



The second photo of the ruins on the water was taken from a different vantage point. I climbed a cliff, which, as it turned out, had a narrow strip of forest with a jogging path closest to the shore, followed by a classic 1970s block of flats. The buildings were ugly, but oh, the views... And that's precisely the view I captured. An isometric perspective from above, filtered through branches. It gave a slightly thrilling sensation, as if I were observing the building in secret. A feeling lifted straight from wartime. The mood is so different from the previous photograph of the same object.



Pic.35.

Pic.36. War's fragments hidden,
Glimpsed through branches overhead—
Calm rests on the trunk, Now transformed to grace.
And spreads around in whispers—
Background caught in motion.

The long-exposure shot showing a bird against the backdrop of a passing ship is intriguing in another way. The water is smoothed out by the technique, yet somehow the bird on the post and the ship remain sharp. The bird must have paused mid-motion, and the ship, from that distance, moved incredibly slowly. The effect is compelling, even though I don't have any particular interpretation for this photo. I simply like it.





Pic.33. SAILING HOME
Nacka, Sweden, May..2021



Pic.34. TORPEDO STATION STUDY 1
Gdynia Poland, Dec..2024



Pic.35. TORPEDO STATION STUDY 2
Gdynia Poland, Dec..2024



Pic.36. THE BIRD AND THE SHIP
Gdynia Poland, Dec..2024



Pic.37. BREAKWATER STUDY 1
Gdynia Poland, Dec..2024



Pic.38. THE BEACH STUDY 1
Jastarnia, Poland, Dec..2024

And finally, a photo that could be a poster for a sequel to Hitchcock's *The Birds*. Some unknown species of bird was perched on a post of that old breakwater, doing whatever birds do. I have no idea why, instead of seagulls, these crow-like creatures were there. They must have won the local territorial battle. Fine by me. A seagull wouldn't have created the same effect, not even against this peculiar "symmetrical" structure.

The complete lack of maintenance, probably since the war, made it look as if it had survived a half-hearted artillery attack. This gave the whole photo a post-apocalyptic vibe, with a pseudo-raven hoping for carrion. Yet, despite all this, I don't feel horror here—perhaps only at first glance. Rather, there is a sense of calm and, again, a reflection on the terrible things humans can inflict on each other. A slightly different kind of landscape after the battle.

During that trip, I took one more photo for this chapter, though apart from the sea and the beach, it has little in common with the previous shots. A very simple composition along the shoreline. I love being on beaches and photographing them. This one, near Jastarnia, was perfect for that purpose. At first glance, there's nothing interesting in the frame, nothing happens. But that's precisely what makes it beautiful. It captures a sense of detachment from civilization after crossing the dunes.

The geometry of the beach is intriguing: the contrasting breakwaters and the line of forest in the distance. The absence of color adds another layer of interest. It's hard to determine the season. Judging by the lack of people, it's probably not summer—unless it's five in the morning...



Pic.37.

A black bird in flight,
Sharp shape like a memento—
Better to forget..

Pic.38.
Far away in the haze,
Nonbeing strikes in full display—
The beauty of void.



We conclude this chapter in Mallorca. More precisely, on the beaches of Can Picafort. Once a fishing village, now a small resort on the northern coast of the island. I know that the first thought for a photo of the Balearics would be a beautiful view of a beach framed by palm trees against turquoise waters. I must apologize, but I doubt anyone should expect anything like that from me at this point in the book. Not least because there isn't a single color photo here.

What interested me more were the rather strange sculptures scattered across the town's coastline. As I later found out, these are the works of a local, quite well-known contemporary artist, famous in Mallorca and probably throughout Spain. The sculptures, as you can see, are rather surreal and, to me, "UFO-like." Some more, some less. I photographed them many times during my stay, but this particular shot worked best. The composition is simple, almost classical. And as it turns out, that approach sometimes works too.

The photo is slightly unsettling. The sea in the background is not calm, the figures are far from beautiful. The sky is not cloudless. The naturally "stone-like" calm of the sculptures may not inspire trust, but neither does it provoke panic. It rather invites curiosity: what exactly are these "aliens" up to?



Pic.39.
Frozen faces stare,
On the rocky coastline there.
Who are they? Who were?

SUMMARY

In this section, I placed photographs that I consider another step forward in my development. A step in the right direction. The subject evolved toward incorporating humanity in nature and, conversely, nature in cities. I am very pleased with the whole series. I may be immodest in saying this, but I believe there are a few world-class shots here—images I wouldn't be ashamed to display even in major galleries. Photographs that are not only decorative but could also aspire to be called art. Whatever that means.



Pic.39. HEADS AND SHILOUETTES STUDY 1
Can Picafort, Mayorca/Spain, Jul.2023

Chapter 5

Urban Landscapes, or What Turned Out to Be My Most Important Motif for Many Years.

At some point, I almost entirely shifted into the urban space. A sort of gentle detox from nature. This included both large metropolises and smaller towns, or even sizable villages. On some of the photos, besides the dominating works of human craft, a human silhouette began to appear. Distant, unrecognizable, without details. Yet, by simply being in the surroundings—and sometimes by the way it was positioned within the composition—it enriched the images with additional layers for interpretation. I started to enjoy it.

This shift was influenced by another great photographer, in my opinion. This time, a man from Asia—Fan Ho. I was far from his photos in terms of subject matter, but I got closer to the world he captured in the streets and hidden corners of cities. He lived in Hong Kong. I lived in Stockholm. It's hard to imagine a greater difference in the lifestyle of the cities themselves.

The first two photos from Stockholm don't include any human element. They're pure urban landscapes – I just want to make it clear that the statue in the image is indeed a statue, not a potential jumper. The photos were taken in touristy areas, but they still turned out beautiful – rare, because fog in the city center doesn't happen often. I like to think that their composition also adds to their uniqueness. I managed to keep that specific calmness and minimalism found in my other works. It's expressed differently here, but it's there.

The photo with the City Hall, taken from the opposite bank of the river, is a pretty view – the perfect picture for Stockholm offices and hotels. I know, because I've sold copies of both to such places. I'm not sure whether I should be happy about their popularity, or – like a "true artist" – quietly mock the unrefined buyers. But then I'd be mocking myself. After all, I took these photos and included them in my portfolio. Which means I like this kind of "low" art too. Though really, that's a silly distinction. It's not some hopeless flea-market photo, all color and no thought. Of course, there are limits – beyond a certain point, something really is trash. This picture would be "perfect" if the reflection in the water fit entirely within the frame. Unfortunately, that was physically impossible at the time. I'd have needed to be on a boat slightly to the side. But I bet most viewers will only notice this imperfection after reading this paragraph. I saw it immediately, but it didn't bother me. It's that Japanese kind of perfect imperfection.

The "jumper" photo carries the same mood. It's not exceptional – it's simply good, and fairly interesting. A different kind of illustration for a more ambitious travel guide. Different light, no color, an unusual composition. And sometimes that's all it takes to be satisfied with yourself.



Pic.40.

Too familiar shape,
Though it hides within the mist.
Yet it stays so fair.

Pic.41.

A figure gazes,
Forever rooted in this place.
Yet the view has changed.



The next series focuses on one of my favorite elements in urban landscapes: bridges. Two Swedish ones—an older and a modern—and one Italian, but photographed twice. Quite old by Swedish standards, almost contemporary by Italian ones.

The Swedish road bridge in Motala is majestic, very Scandinavian in its simplicity. It's also extremely tall, spanning a branch of the lake. There's a human silhouette—a cyclist, whom I had to wait for quite a while, as there aren't many of them in March. Even in Sweden. I caught some nice evening light, though the whole day had been dull and gray. The sun brought out shadows and the building's minimalist, sharp shapes, allowing the tiny silhouette to stand out without any details. A bridge "above everything" yet leading nowhere, thanks to a composition that crops both ends of the structure and a slightly frog-eye perspective.



Pic.42.

Pic.43.
Where I come from,
Who I am—or sometimes am—
Becomes where I head.

Above the rooftops,
A lonely figure rushes by.
From or toward... who knows?

The second bridge connects Kungsholmen island with the Norrmalm district in Stockholm. Just outside the frame on the right is City Hall, but the composition wasn't meant to include it. In the background is Riddarholmen—more specifically, the delicate, lacy tower of Riddarkyrka on that small island.

The shot was taken around seven on a Sunday morning. No crowds. Cold. Foggy. I was running out of ideas. And then this person appeared—hunched, bundled up, the wind sweeping around him—walking briskly.

Where are you from? Who are you? Where are you going? A philosophical motif, inspired intuitively by Paul Gauguin. Again, the composition is unorthodox—central-layered, as I call it. You won't find it in any serious photography books.





Pic.40. T-HALL SHINE
Stockholm Sweden, Nov.2022



Pic.41. SEEING SÖDER
Stockholm Sweden, Nov.2022



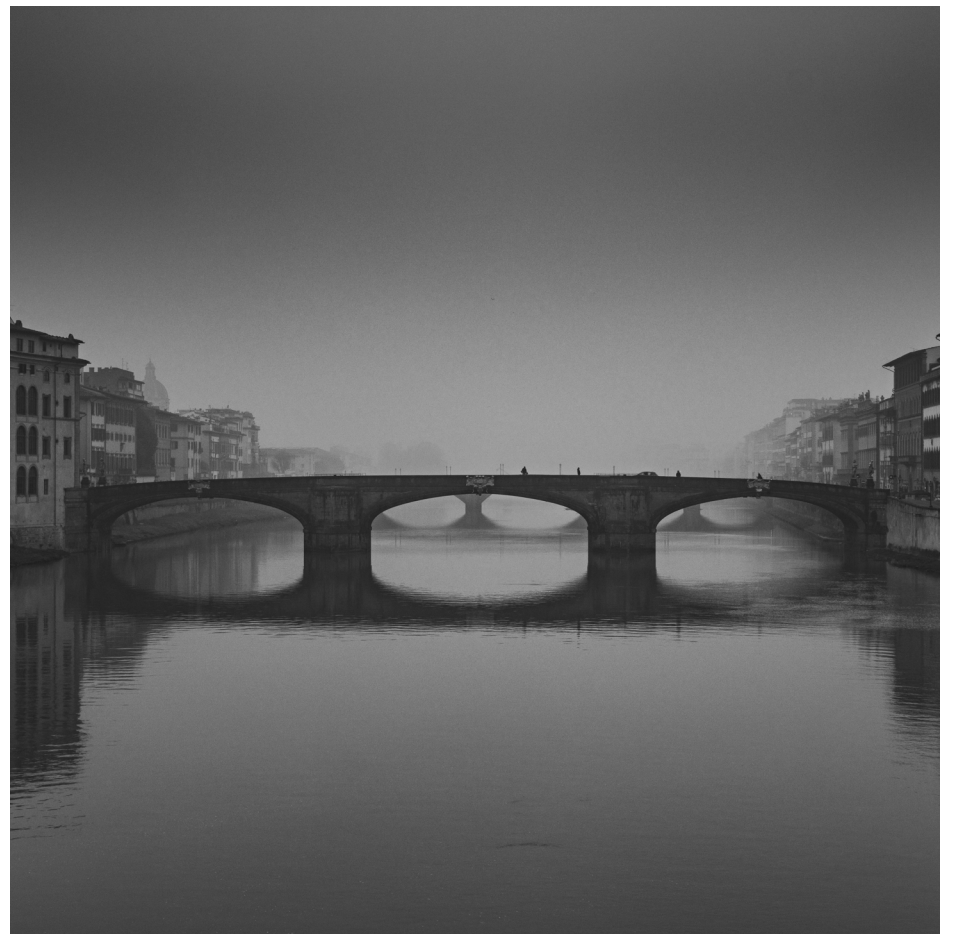
Pic.42. OVER ALL
Motala Sweden, Apr.2023



Pic.43. MORNING WALK
Stockholm, Sweden, Nov.2022

Choosing this bridge was a bit of a provocation on my part toward Florence. I visited the city at Christmas and stayed until New Year's. It was cold, foggy—the kind of conditions a photographer loves most. But unfortunately, there were still plenty of tourists. So I went out to shoot early in the morning, very early. This is one of those mornings. Fewer tourists, but locals rushing to work. Naturally, I was heading to Ponte Vecchio, Florence's pride. The pride turned out interesting, but not for a photographer like me—tight spaces, cluttered details, too many people, weak compositions. Exhausted and disappointed, I stood in the middle of the bridge and leaned on the railing. The central part of the bridge is free from stalls and features a small square with a sculpture. At one point, I turned and saw... the other bridge. I had noticed it before, but without the fog, the background had Florence's relatively modern apartment blocks, which discouraged me from photographing it. But at that moment, everything aligned. I took the shot, and I consider it amazing, despite its primitive, fairly symmetrical composition. It's a "straight from the bridge" photo—dark winter morning light, the rush of the day tempered by an unexpected absence of chaos and tension. There are human silhouettes on the bridge, and they bring just the right touch of dynamic energy. I later discovered that it's the Ponte della Santissima Trinità, which I had never heard of before.

Never before, and never since, have I had two photos of the same subject, in the same place, at the same time, and with a similar composition make it into my portfolio. Yet here I made an exception. Both are... simply different. They carry different atmospheres and evoke different perceptions. The second is less dark, emotionally lighter. It is even more minimalist, as I removed both edges of the frame and focused entirely on the bridge itself.



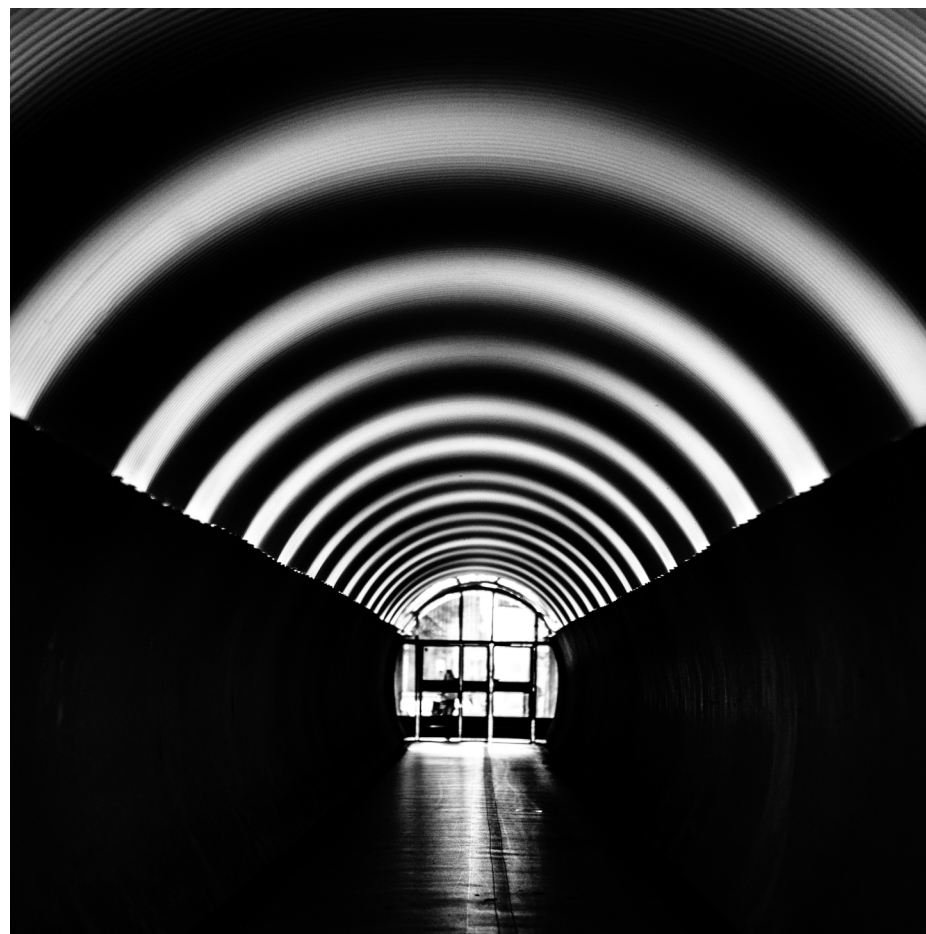
Pic.44.

Simple symmetry,
Yet asymmetry appears
When viewed up close.

Pic.45.
Mist reveals something,
Something like a hidden bridge—
Where does someone go?



Two somewhat abstract photographs are essentially a study of light and shadow, this time in tunnels. The moment came when conditions outside were hopeless. The first image shows Stockholm's longest pedestrian tunnel (Brunkebergs Tunneln). The lighting created these radiating semi-circles. Since it was again a Sunday morning, I had to wait about fifteen minutes before anyone appeared at the entrance. To slightly alter the interpretation of the photo, and as in previous cases enrich it a bit, the silhouette in the frame introduces a subtle narrative. The image itself is not unique—anyone could go there and take almost the same shot. But it is precisely this figure that makes it “almost.”



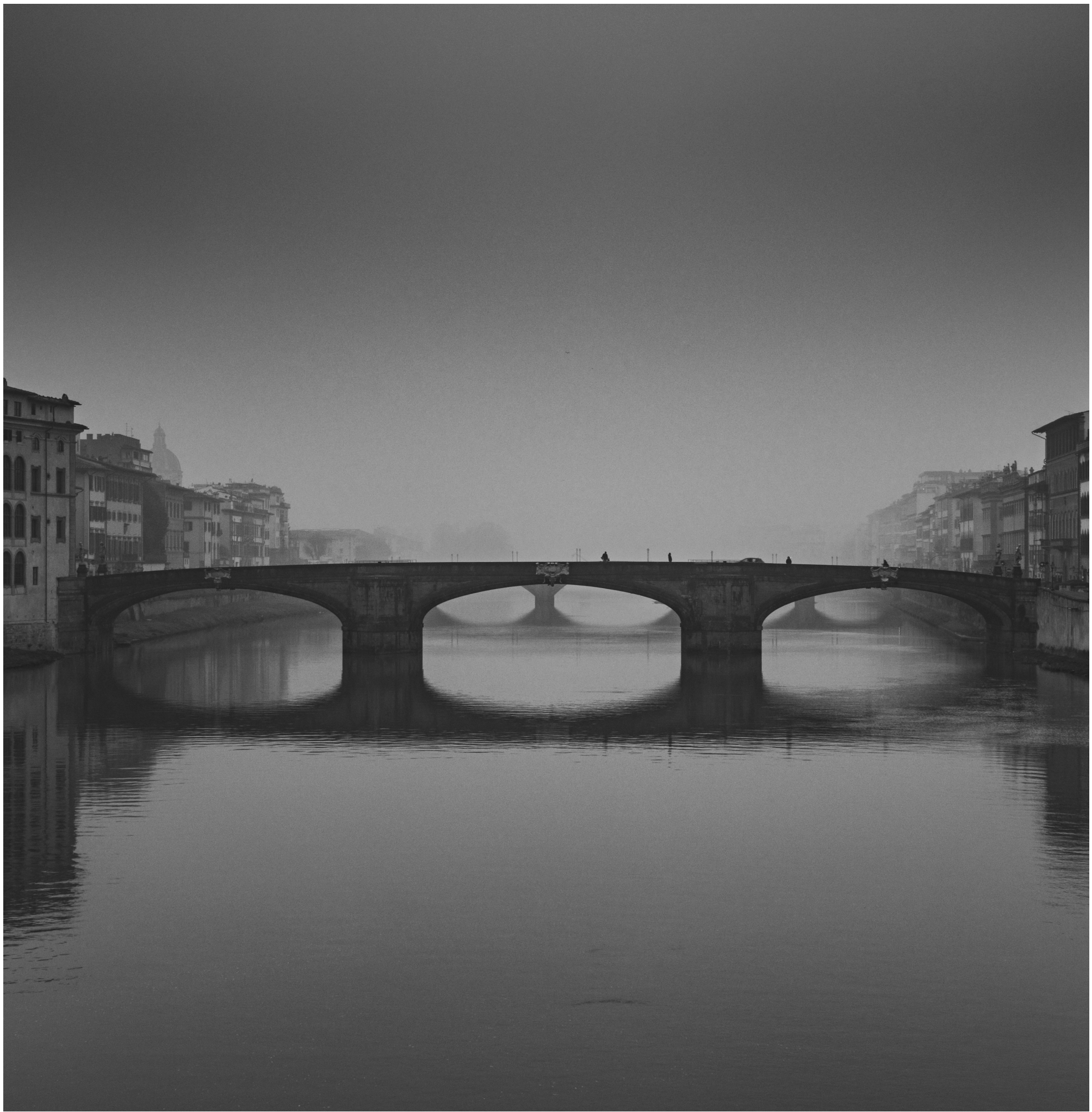
Pic.46.

Like a target's mark,
Appearing far in the distance—
Focus of the eye?

Pic.47.
Light is the motion
That cuts through all the shadows—
Neither shape nor form.

Karlberg Tunnel, connecting the Solna district from the highway to the city center, was the next subject. I had to, admittedly not entirely legally, position myself on a small green island where people are not normally allowed. But what wouldn't one do for a good photo? I posed no real danger, as the road was completely empty at the time. I shot with a long exposure, creating a dynamic yet minimalist composition. There is motion, but not jerky—just a smooth speed of light. There are no details because anything stationary was... a lamp. Everything else remained completely black. And that's exactly what I wanted to achieve: a light visual oxymoron—minimalist yet conveying the essence of movement. Phew, I expressed that quite cleverly... Though honestly, I'm not sure I fully understand what I just wrote. But art doesn't have to be precise and entirely comprehensible, right?





Pic.44. BRIDGE DAY B
Florence, Italy, Jan 2023



Pic.45. BRIDGE DAY A
Florence, Italy, Jan2023



Pic.46. TUNNELS & LIGHTS STUDY 2
Stockholm, Sweden, Jul.2023



Pic.47. TUNNELS & LIGHTS STUDY 1
Stockholm, Sweden, May.2023



Pic.48. ARCADES STUDY 1
Stockholm, Sweden, May 2023



Pic.49. ANTAGONISTS
Rissne, Sweden, Oct. 2024

The Stockholm City Hall arcades represent another, perhaps even more classical, study of light and shadow. Surprisingly, it's a rather difficult motif to find in this city due to its sprawling architecture. There are few narrow streets or hidden corners outside the small, crowded old town. The shot turned out very well—not perfect, but good enough to stand out. I could have reduced the number of background details, which might have produced an even stronger effect, but the geometry and light in this photo justify leaving it as it is. Sometimes it's nice to make that kind of decision for yourself...



Pic.48.

Pic.49.
A misty background,
Foreground brought into focus—
And what is this, then?

What stays in shadow—
Remains within the shadow—
Light has its own aim.

The final photograph was taken roughly two hundred meters from my current apartment in the Sundbyberg district. In a park that is generally not very photogenic—just a green space for residents rather than a showpiece for tourists. But this time there was fog, quite dense and stable. I went for a short walk as soon as I looked out the window upon waking. Almost immediately, I stumbled upon this composition. There are many installations like the one in the foreground in my area. I don't know what they are for and haven't bothered to find out. The fog, which cut away nearly the entire background except for two trees, created a completely new and intriguing image. These elements are a perfect example of civilization set against nature—a trace that is even slightly mystical, as their true purpose remains lost in the fog of my ignorance, despite the availability of Google.



Epilogue

At is time for the final words in this journey through the meanders of my photography. The photographs chosen here are the ones I am certain were fully mine at the time. They remain partly mine still, but such a set will likely never appear again.

They are mine in terms of style and the certainty that they represent exactly what I wanted to create. Something I will not feel ashamed of, even if I completely change my subject matter. No matter where I take photographs in the future, they will carry some common thread of my photographic self.

I feel that I am already close to creating the perfect photographs—perfect for me, of course. And I will never truly reach them. But that is precisely the point. The goal should be close enough to keep motivation alive, yet distant enough that it is never fully attainable. Being an engineer, I would describe it like this: it is like leaving a Banach space for a convergent sequence (for example, $1/n$). A convergent sequence means that each successive element comes closer to the next (as n approaches infinity), but the limit of their differences lies outside the set of elements ($\epsilon = 0$ is not included in the set for this sequence). This is my mathematical prescription for lifelong motivation to create.

In simpler terms, one must strive for the ideal, moving ever closer with each achievement, yet never fully attaining it. The most important thing is that we draw nearer and nearer to that goal, never allowing ourselves to stagnate in our growth.